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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 KABUL 000441

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/03/2020  
TAGS: PGOV PREL KDEM AF  
SUBJECT: REINTEGRATION AND RECONCILIATION - AFGHAN  
AWARENESS AND ACCEPTANCE

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Classified By: D/Ambassador Francis J. Ricciardone; Reasons (b) and (d)  
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¶1. (S/REL UK) Summary: Now that President Karzai has launched his broad Peace and Integration policy themes, his government's next political task, even as it must devise a program to advance the policy, is to develop nation-wide acceptance of the policy. An inclusive and transparent approach could help the policy become a rallying point for Afghans seeking peace and national unity; but if its parameters and protections are not clearly explained, it could exacerbate tensions among those who genuinely fear the erosion of the rights and privileges of women, non-Pashtuns, and non-Pashtun regions of the country. We are supporting the GIRoA in this effort and in particular are emphasizing that any "Peace" Jirgas on this topic should address these concerns with ample female representation and broad ethnic and regional participation. We have also made clear that a wide and influential foreign audience will be paying attention. End Summary.

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Too Little Transparency  
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¶2. (S/REL UK) Due in part to sensitivities regarding past U.S. concerns over reintegration, and probably also to the politics of creating a new program when the powerful Mojadedi family already thought it had the franchise, the Karzai government was loathe to make the policy public before London. More foreigners than Afghans had seen the plan before its unveiling on January 28. The policy was presented to the 26-nation Joint Coordination Monitoring Board (JCMB) plenary on January 20, but only publicized to the Afghan public through a poorly covered journalist roundtable January ¶23. The lack of information continues; Deputy National Security Advisor Shaida Mohammad Abdali confirmed to us February 3 that despite wide media coverage which has Afghans discussing and debating the policy, the central government has not shared the "plan" as released in London with either provincial Governors or Members of Parliament because the full implementation strategy is not ready yet. Abdali added that there was no need to disseminate this information because "most Afghans" support the initiative; he discounted any opposition as "purely political."

¶3. (S/REL UK) The GIRoA's "close hold" tactic has engendered unnecessary fear and suspicion, in particular among human rights and female leaders, non-Pashtun ethnicities, and opposition politicians. For example, Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission Director (AIHRC) Sima Samar had not been briefed by the government even after the JCMB reintegration paper had been shared with local embassies. Karzai's current lead on reintegration, Masoom Stanekzai, told us that he was reluctant to share the document with

Samar because "this is a sensitive issue and GIROA will need to make sure everyone is on board." After we noted that if the program were announced in London without the awareness of human rights organizations, there could be a negative reaction, Stanekzai agreed to pass on the paper to Samar. But as of January 31, Samar told us the GIROA had not shared the information with her.

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Some Genuine Fears ...  
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¶4. (S/REL UK) Afghanistan's non-Pashtun population appears to also have had little input. Some even within the government claim that the policy appeared to reflect the dominance of Pashtuns in Karzai's circle of key advisors (Ministers of Defense, Interior and Treasury; National Security Advisor and the entire NSC; Stanekzai; Independent Directorate of Local Government). Another criticism, voiced for example by Senior MFA Advisor Davood Marodian (protect) is that a Grand Peace Jirga would only serve to "rubber-stamp" Karzai's plan but would not achieve popular buy-in of the majority of the Afghan people, who are not Pashtun.

¶5. (S/REL UK) Ambiguity among international and Afghan decision-makers between reintegration (of low to mid-level insurgents) and reconciliation (of top tier leaders) also contributes to the confusion and is complicated by the fact that one term is commonly used for both concepts in Dari and Pashto. Most Afghans are likely to agree with Karzai's statement in London that emphasized renouncing violence and agreeing to living in a peaceful society enshrined in the Afghan Constitution, and to support the programs aimed at low-level fighters. However, non-Pashtuns and women are

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generally more leery of the ramifications of high-level reconciliation, believing it means allowing political power sharing with the Taliban and possibly accepting the return of their draconian ways.

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... And Political Considerations  
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¶6. (C/REL UK) Some politicians are exploiting public concerns regarding Karzai's Peace and Reintegration Program as a potential rallying point vs. Karzai's current political dominance. We learned from the former United Front spokesman, Sayed Sancharaki, that former presidential candidate Abdullah, Lower House Speaker Qanooni and former President Rabbani were reconstituting the United Front under the new name "National Hope and Change Coalition (NHCC)." Sancharaki said that the NHCC would advocate for a "responsible and transparent" reconciliation and reintegration policy. Using a line we will likely hear during the upcoming Parliamentary elections, he said he feared Karzai would use the reconciliation process to further Pashtunize the government and would only appoint representatives to the Peace Jirga who will support his agenda.

¶7. (S/REL UK) In a January 31 meeting, former Taliban Foreign Minister Wakil Ahmed Mutawakil, removed from the UNSCR 1267 sanctions list on 26 January, struck a note of skepticism, no doubt reflecting his desire to play a larger role in upcoming negotiations. He warned that focusing on reintegration before reconciliation would likely fail. While he recognized that the London Conference was a "good start" to the reconciliation process, in particular because many Islamic countries had participated, negotiations with Taliban leaders and the removal of Taliban from the UN and U.S. "blacklists" were necessary to move forward. Reintegration of rank and file Taliban would serve little purpose if others quickly fill their ranks, he said. Mutawakil claimed the

Northern Alliance would block the peace process because of its deep distrust of the Karzai government.

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The Way Forward  
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18. (S/REL UK) Karzai's own basic commitment to human rights, the advocacy of Afghan women, including by the Afghan Women's Network at the London Conference, and the Secretary's leadership in ensuring women's rights were recognized in the process, no doubt underlay the emphasis in his London speech that the framework of reintegration would be the Afghan constitution. Karzai's speech also clearly emphasized that his plan was national and would benefit all Afghans. He also announced the creation of a National Council for Peace, Reconciliation, and Reintegration that would represent Afghanistan's rich ethnic and regional diversity and include the voice of Afghan women. Since then, his Chief of Staff has told us that Karzai will also create an informal "brainstorming" consulting group, to include Afghan government officials and luminaries of diverse ethnic and regional origins, along with U.S. and UK Embassy, ISAF, and UNAMA leadership, to formulate recommendations for implementation and public support of Karzai's Peace and Integration Program.

19. (C/REL UK) Karzai's London remarks were an encouraging start, but to achieve his peace and reintegration agenda, Karzai must also effectively deal with Afghanistan's recent past. AIHRC Chair Sima Samar told us that from what she understood of the new plan, it seemed to have no connection to the need that many Afghans feel for accountability from those who perpetrated the worst excesses of three decades of war. Not only the Taliban, but also those who collaborated with the Soviets and others who fought with the Mujahedin during the civil war, have benefited from the current culture of impunity. Afghanistan's 2007 Amnesty Law allows victims and families to bring criminal or civil claims against persons for individual crimes, but it fails to address the violators' accountability to the state, and the state's authority to prosecute in the absence of a civil complaint. Because the law leaves prosecution for any past crimes a matter for debate, many human rights activists may argue that the state must hold reintegrated insurgents accountable for crimes against women and other human rights crimes.

110. (S/REL UK) We are encouraging the Karzai government to work more assiduously through multiple avenues -- shuras and jirgas that include women and reflect the country's ethnic makeup, robust media outreach, and the cooperation of ulemas

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-- to explain the policy and to invite input on implementation. Recently, the Ambassador emphasized in a print media roundtable and in Afghan television interviews our support for Karzai's program and the need to ensure it guarantees broad participation and respects the Afghan constitution. A plan that includes safeguards and explains its potentially positive impact on Afghan society at large would assuage public fears of a Taliban return. We also advocate that some reintegration funds should be allocated to protect human rights, for example, to support regional offices of AIHRC in areas where reintegration occurs, to teach human rights values in the context of Islam and the Afghan constitution as part of the "deradicalization" program.

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